

Message Text

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42

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCCT-01 TRSE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SY-04 FBIE-00 EB-04 OMB-01 COME-00

IO-10 AID-05 SCA-01 USSS-00 /079 W

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P 151230Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1363

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 13740

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS LE US

SUBJ: ALLEGED BOMB PLOT AGAINST EMBASSY BEIRUT

1. LOCAL PRESS FOR PAST TWO DAYS HAS BEEN FULL OF SPECULATION RE REPORT THAT BEIRUT POLICE, IN FOILING BOMB ATTEMPT DURING NIGHT NOV 13-14 AGAINST LOCAL AUTOMOBILE AGENCY SPECIALIZING IN AMERICAN-MADE CARS, HAVE UNCOVERED FAR-REACHING PLOT ON PART OF HOME-GROWN AND/OR PALESTINIAN TERRORIST GROUP TO BLOW UP VARIOUS US INSTALLATIONS HERE, INCLUDING THIS EMBASSY. PRESS ACCOUNTS STATE THAT PERSONS ARRESTED INCLUDE FOUR PALESTINIANS, AT LEAST ONE LEBANESE AND ONE ENGLISHMAN AND/OR FRENCHMAN, AND MANY PAPERS PURPORT TO DRAW LINK BETWEEN THEIR ACTIVITIES AND OTHER RECENT BOMB ATTACKS HERE AND IN DAMASCUS. OTHER ACCOUNTS SPECIFY THEY WERE OPERATING UNDER DIRECTION OF AN UNIDENTIFIED ARAB EMBASSY IN BEIRUT, WHICH ALLEGEDLY HAD BANK-ROLLED THEIR ACTIVITIES IN TUNE OF 2 MILLION LEBANESE POUNDS (DOLS 850,000.).

2. LEBANESE INTERNAL SECURITY OFFICIALS CONFIRMED TO LEGATT NOV 15 THAT THEY HAVE RECENTLY ARRESTED SIX PERSONS, INCLUDING FIVE PALESTINIANS AND ONE JORDANIAN POSSESSING LEBANESE
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CITIZENSHIP, AND CHARGED THEM WITH ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF

EXPLOSIVES. ACCORDING TO THESE OFFICIALS, ALL SIX HAVE CONFESSED TO MEMBERSHIP IN PFLP AND TO HAVING PLANNED ATTACKS AGAINST AMERICAN INSTALLATIONS HERE UNDER DIRECTON OF MILITARY ATTACHE AT LIBYAN EMBASSY. THEY ALSO REPORTEDLY ADMITTED THAT THEIR PLANS HAD INCLUDED AN ATTACK AGAINST THIS EMBASSY AT SOME FUTURE DATE, BUT LEBANESE OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN UNABLE OBTAIN ANY FURTHER DETAILS RE THIS OPERATION.

3. AT SAME TIME, COL JULES BOUSTANI, CHIEF OF LEBANESE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE (G-2), TOLD EMBOFF NOV 15 THAT INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES (ISF) HAVE ARRESTED ONLY FOUR RPT FOUR PALESTINIANS AND ONE LEBANESE (LATTER REPORTEDLY CONNECTED WITH PFLP) IN CONNECTION WITH ABOVE "PLOT", ALL OF WHOM WERE CAUGHT IN ACT OF PLACING EXPLOSIVES AT LOCAL AUTOMOBILE AGENCY ON NIGHT NOV 13-14. BOUSTANI SAID THAT THE FOUR PALESTINIANS--ALL OF WHOM POSSESS PAST TIES WITH UNIDENTIFIED FEDAYEEN ORGANIZATION--HADBEEN RECRUITED BY THE LEBANESE DETAINEE AT BEHEST OF A BUSINESS COMPETITOR OF THE AGENCY'S OWNER FOR PURPOSE OF BOMBING LATTER'S SHOWROOM IN ORDER "DISCOURAGE" HIM FROM CONCLUDING SOME BUSINESS DEAL WHICH THEY WERE BOTH PURSUING. BOUSTANI ADDED THAT THE OPERATION HAD BEEN "BLOWN" BY ANONYMOUS PHONE CALL WHICH POLICE RECEIVED FROM SOME UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE. HE INSISTED THAT THIS WAS ALL THERE WAS TO THEIR "PLOT" AND THAT PRESS STORIES TO CONTRARY HAD BEEN INFLUENCED BY CULPRITS' EFFORTS TO CLOAK THEIR CRIME IN "POLITICAL" WRAPPINGS AND BY SENSATION-ALIST PROCLIVITIES OF LOCAL NEWSPAPERS.

4. COMMENT: DESPITE VERSION GIVEN US BY BOUSTANI IN PARA 3 ABOVE, WE TEND TO SUSPECT THERE IS MORE TO THIS "PLOT" THAN HE IS WILLING TO ADMIT. (AS NOTED BEIRUT 10444 AND PREVIOUS, WE HAVE OFTEN FOUND G-2 OFFICIALS TO BE RATHER RETICENT IN PROVIDING DETAILS IN CONNECTION WITH SUCH INCIDENTS.) WE BELIVE REPORT OBTAINED FROM INTERNAL SECURITY OFFICIALS (PARA 2 ABOVE) IS PROBABLY MORE ACCURATE, PARTICULARLY SINCE WE KNOW LIBYAN EMBASSY TO BE CONTINUALLY ACTIVE AND FREE WTII QADHAFI'S MONEY IN FOMENTING ALL SORTS OF SKULLDUGGERY AMONG LOCAL CRIMINAL AND PALESTINIAN "DISSIDENT" ELEMENTS HERE. WE THEREFORE INTEND TO FOLLOW THIS LATEST DEVELOPMENT CLOSELY AND WILL REPORT FURTHER DETAILS AS THEY BECOME AVAILABLE.

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